

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# All the Year Round

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## ONLY A BUSINESS MAN.

BY MAY DRYDEN.

### CHAPTER I.

A GIRL of about eighteen years of age was sitting by the window of a small room. She was sewing, but every now and then her hands dropped idly on her lap, and she gazed dreamily into the dreary street. Her black, crape-trimmed dress seemed to denote the recent loss of some friend or relative; her face wore a tired, anxious expression. Presently, however, it lit up with a smile; she rose quickly, and, letting her work lie where it fell, ran downstairs to hold the house-door open for a young man who was coming along the road. If she had looked tired, he looked doubly so, appearing, indeed, hardly able to drag one foot after the other, and carrying his head bent down. He was slightly built and very thin, and his careworn countenance contrasted strangely with his evident youthfulness. He and the girl were unmistakably brother and sister; both had keen, restless grey eyes, with the same possibilities of great love and tenderness expressed in them; both had light hair, in the brother thin and spare, leaving his temples and heavy brows much exposed; in the sister bright and abundant, full of pretty wayward kinks and curls. In both the mouth was mobile and sensitive, showing every change of feeling, and suggesting a certain incongruity between it and a somewhat heavy under-jaw and a square chin.

These were Clarence and Gordon Fenchurch, the two youngest children of Philip Fenchurch, lately deceased, who had been the senior partner of the firm of Fenchurch Brothers, cotton manufacturers, of Homcester.

"Don't speak to me, Clarence," was all Gordon said, as he came up the steps and his sister held out a welcoming hand to him.

Apparently she was used to his mood; she obeyed him literally, contenting herself with moving about him for a while, and plying him with all manner of little womanly tendernesses. He stood much in need of her good offices. Lying back in an easy-chair, he remained perfectly quiescent while she waited on him. Between her ministrations she laid the cloth for tea, stepping from cupboard to table with noiseless tread, and handling cups and saucers with deft fingers that made no slightest rattle.

When Gordon came home, worn out as he was to-night, Clarence allowed no one but herself to enter the room in which he was. Presently a servant brought up boiling water. Clarence took it at the door, and brewed the tea, then turned again to her brother.

"Now, Gordon," said she, "tea is ready."

He left the room at once, and shortly returned, having arranged his hair and dress with a scrupulous nicety not often found in a Homcester man, a being rather given to despising the small particularities which go to make the exterior of a gentleman, and apt to consider that clean nails and a well-brushed coat belong to a polish which is a necessary concomitant of metropolitan falseness.

Gordon Fenchurch, however, was particular almost to conceit about his personal appearance.

Clarence gave him his tea, and waited until he had taken it before she spoke to him again. She was one of those rare women who know when to be silent. As he began to look somewhat refreshed, and

to lose a little of his weariness, she asked : " Well, Gordon, what news ? "

" Bad news, Clare, for me," he answered despondently. " But what does it matter ? When did things ever turn out anything but badly for me ? "

" Hush, Gordon ! how can you tell ? It may not really be so dreadful after all. What is this news which is so bad for us ? "

" I said for me ; you are all right, Clare."

" What nonsense ! As though news could be bad for you and not for me. Do tell me what it is ? "

" We have been arranging my father's papers all day long. They are in the greatest confusion ; but we have found his will."

" Well, what then ? You were looking for it, were you not ? "

" Jamison drew up the will, so we sent for him, and read it. Clarence, I am not even mentioned in it."

" Not mentioned ! But, Gordon, how can that be ? I do not understand. My father had no reason for leaving you out. You never displeased him ! "

" I do not understand either. I cannot explain. The will was made years and years ago, when I was a mere baby. You know what a curious mixture of carelessness in private affairs and accuracy in business, father was. He must have just forgotten all about me, and I dare say Jamison did not know of my existence. At any rate, everything is left to Everett, and Mark, and Staniland, excepting a thousand pounds each to Eleanor and you."

" But, Gordon, of course the older ones will make it all right. I suppose they will keep on the business ? "

" Yes, they are all partners now, you know."

" Then, no doubt, they will give you a share too. Have you asked them ? "

" Asked them ! Do you really imagine for a moment that I would stoop to beg of my brothers ? "

" Gordon, do not be too proud. Do not offend them."

Gordon paid no attention to her words. He had risen, and was pacing with angry, rapid strides up and down the room.

" That is the worst of it," he said. " I don't mind about being rich—you know I do not. But you know, too, how my father loved his business, and what he has made of it. And he trusted me to carry it on. He had no idea he was going to die for

many a long year yet, or I am sure he would have secured me a share in it. We talked of it a hundred times, and I saw such wonderful capabilities in it. I understood it, I think, even better than he understood it himself. It will nearly break my heart to see it all go to rack and ruin. But, Clare, it is not for the sake of the money ; you believe that, do you not ? "

" Of course I do ; but why do you keep harping on that so, Gordon. I have never thought you too fond of money."

" Everett was accusing me just now of being too fond of it. He said I cared for nothing else. He said I had neglected my education, and my family ties, and everything else that was good, just to get a hold upon business life. Rather a sharp accusation that, to bring against a young fellow of twenty, was it not ? "

Gordon laughed, but there was no merriment in his laugh.

" It was too bad," said Clarence warmly ; " and quite false. What could make Everett say such a thing ? "

" Well, in the course of our work to-day, it came out that I am the only one of them who really knows anything about the business. I was surprised myself to find out how little they all understand about the mills and everything connected with them, when they've been drawing their income from them for years. If you will believe me, Everett was actually not aware how many hands we employed in the Darley Brow Mill, and did not know the name of either of our overlookers, nor how much we gave them a week. He was downright indignant, too, because we employ half-timers—says we are robbing the poor children of half of their education. I had to keep setting them all right on one point after another, and of course they did not like it. But how could I help it ? I tell you what, Clare, they will never be able to disentangle the confusion affairs have dropped into without me. They are no more fit for it than you are—no, nor half so fit."

" Why should they carry it on without you ? I should think they would be only too glad to give you a share—the share that should by rights have been yours."

" What share ? Nothing is legally mine, and my brothers offer me—"

" Well ? "

" A clerkship at five-and-twenty shillings a week, with the promise of a rise if things go on successfully. If, indeed ! There is not the slightest chance that they will.

Then they say, if I can raise a certain sum of money, they will give me a small share in the business."

"Mean!" cried Clare.

"Wait a minute; there is more behind. Things are all at sixes and sevens already. There has been some frightful muddling somewhere. With the business in a splendidly flourishing condition, there is apparently not a penny of ready money to be had."

"But my father lived so simply of late. We must have known it if he had spent any large sum of money. There must surely be some mistake."

"No; Everett and Stan and Mark have all been drawing absurdly large incomes. That, no doubt, was why father retrenched so. I suspect the worry of it killed him at last. You know what he was. He'd have gone without his dinner any time that Everett might dine twice, and that was pretty much what it came to. Well, Everett must draw in now."

"Poor Everett!" said Clarence thoughtfully.

Poor Everett indeed! He was the eldest of Mr. Fenchurch's large family. There were nearly twenty years between Clarence and him. She had always been very, very fond of this brother of hers. Some women are born willing slaves to father or brothers, or both. Content if permitted to adore the men with whom they are thrown, and absurdly grateful for the smallest recognition of their devotion, they are often unwilling to transfer their allegiance, even to a husband. Clarence was one of these. As a child she had revered Everett almost as she had revered her father. She had some excuse for her infatuation, for infatuation it was, as she painfully discovered with riper years. Everett's personal appearance was such as to inspire respect. He was tall and strong; indeed, of commanding aspect, and very handsome. "A perfect gentleman," casual acquaintances called him, and compared him to Colonel Newcome. Grave and generally self-contained, he nevertheless knew when to relax so as to give gratification to those about him. Courteous to everyone, his manners were winning and gracious in the extreme to those younger than himself, always leaving an impression on their minds that it was good indeed in such a man to condescend to talk to them. He was well-educated, had never ceased to cultivate his mind, and could set folks right on any subject they presumed to talk about.

But then he always set them right so kindly, with such an air of apology for seeming to know better than they did, that their feelings were never hurt. His own memory was tenacious, as was Gordon's also. Gordon, however, turned his to account almost solely for business, burdened it with the prices of thousands of pieces, the patterns and cost of making the same, and such like details of his trade. Everett acquired some knowledge in nearly every branch of learning; was a good linguist, knew something of science, could hold forth at will on almost any question, political or social. He was a bibliomaniac too; in fact, had no tastes which were not thoroughly refined. His own room in his exquisite house was full of rare and precious books, elegant bits of statuary and quaint antiques. He would show his treasures with a deprecating smile and say:

"It is foolish, I know, to set such store by perishable things, but really, I cannot resist a rare book or gem when I see it."

To all this he added a highly religious temperament. He, like his brothers and sisters, had been brought up in the Church of England, and in the strictest Evangelical school of that Church. He had taken to religion very kindly. He liked to observe ordinances and ceremonies. He was a strict sabbatarian. Very different had been the effect of their bringing up on Gordon and Clarence. Possibly Everett himself had done much to disgust them with these outside shows of religion, which seem to mean so much and are in reality so hollow; for, after all, the strongest characteristics of this wonderful man were gross selfishness and contemptible weakness of mind in the practical affairs of life.

## CHAPTER II.

"GORDON," said Clarence, after a pause, "what shall you do?"

"Why do you ask what I shall do? It is no business of mine."

"Oh, well," said Clarence, with easy assurance, "of course I know you'll have to put things straight now, whatever happens afterwards."

"I don't know. Everett is an idiot about business really, and Mark and Staniland are just wild with him. No wonder! Do you know, if Stan were to die tomorrow, there would not be money to put his little lads to school? And that with one of the best businesses in Homcester. It is maddening!"

"And is it Everett's fault?"

"Largely; the others are to blame, too, though. They ought all to have known better what they were about, and not have spent money so recklessly. And instead of doing anything, they just waste their time wrangling like three old women, as to whose fault it is. And to think that the fools are planning to shut me out from any share in the guidance of affairs!"

"Gordon, if you could buy your share now, at once, would they let you?"

"What is the good of asking that? How could I do it?"

"There is my thousand pounds, I suppose; is that safe?"

Clarence spoke hesitatingly and thoughtfully.

"Safe enough! But how can you imagine I would touch that? You must have as low an opinion of me as Everett has."

"You think too much of Everett's opinion, and of everyone else's, Gordon; but that does not matter now. Why should you not take my money? You do not imagine the firm will fail, do you?"

"No, not if I can get a voice in the management of affairs; otherwise, yes."

"Well, then, in case my money gave you that voice, it would be safely invested. It must be invested somewhere, and why should not you have the use of it, as well as anyone else? Indeed, it seems to me to be the simplest way out of the difficulty for everybody concerned. Gordon dear, do take it."

She had risen, and was standing with one arm around her brother; he stooped and kissed her.

"My darling," said he, "I will take it. I really believe it will be quite safe. I had not thought of it before. It will not be much, but with that, and showing them that they cannot do without me, I will make them let me in. I shall ask for only a small share, but only let me get my foothold—only give me a start, and then——"

"Then, Gordon?"

"Then, Clarence, I will show you what that business may be made. If I live to be forty years old, it shall be the largest thing of its kind in the neighbourhood. We will be rich, Clare, and powerful because we are rich. We will employ hundreds of men. Crowds shall be dependent upon us."

The young man's eye glowed as he spoke. What was all this ardour for? For business? Yes. Was there then

truth in his brother's accusation? Did Gordon Fenchurch neglect everything that he might become a good business man? Yes, there was a first truth in that accusation, but a nobler and wider truth lay behind. Everett saw in business nothing that was not sordid, mean, and poor. Out of the fulness of his heart his mouth spoke. Had he been an ardent business man, sordidness, meanness, poverty of heart, and mind, and soul, were the qualities which he would have developed, and he could not conceive that, with any man, it could be otherwise.

But Gordon saw by a purer light. He saw the great possibilities for good which lay in a successful commercial career. He thought of and longed for the immense power and influence that might and should belong to a man on whom hundreds were dependent for their daily bread. Each of the brothers, in reality, took out of the commercial life just what he put into it. It must always be so. There was yet another motive impelling Gordon to grasp at a business life. That was the power he felt within himself to achieve success in it. What is the motive that impels an artist to paint his never-dying picture—a poet to sing his ever-echoing songs, save just that same consciousness of innate power?

Am I appearing to apologise for my hero? Nothing is further from my intention. He needs no apology. His life was as he ever meant it should be—upright, good, and true.

Clarence looked at her brother, as he spoke, with a loving admiration and a comprehension of his desires and aims such as he might never hope to meet with elsewhere. But, nevertheless, Everett's saying of the afternoon rang in her ears and forced her to utter a warning:

"Gordon dear, take care. What afterwards? What behind?"

"Afterwards! Who can tell? Behind? Always you and I, sister mine, and, in us, two lives lived as fully as possible. But there is no danger, I know. Listen, Clare. I know I shall succeed. I will succeed. Be it yours to see that I am not lost in my success."

"I accept the charge, Gordon; be it mine."

They were full, this young brother and sister, of loving faith in each other. Clarence never doubted Gordon's power to accomplish his end in life. Gordon thought that he could not go wrong while always, at

home, was this gentle, loving sister waiting to encourage, help, and ennable him. Was it not a pure, good compact that they made, though it only referred to business? Was not Gordon Fenchurch as truly a young hero, equipping himself in a noble and brave spirit for the battle of life, as any who sought for a high place in the ranks of art, or literature, or science? His was the desire to be a man among men, to use to the utmost his God-given powers; God-given as truly as any powers which men value highly, and as truly fit to be used for the service of God and man.

Both brother and sister were silent for a time. Then Clarence, ever thoughtful of Gordon's health, spoke.

"We must go to bed now, dear. I wish I could ensure your going to sleep."

"How can I sleep with things as they are now? How rest with the prospect of our interview with Everett to-morrow? I do not think I have slept six hours in the past six nights. But my restlessness is no reason why you should sit up, my dear little sister. So go to bed and to sleep."

Clarence would have stayed with her brother, but Gordon generally got his own way when he had made up his mind that he would have it, and she retired.

The young man plunged immediately into a mass of intricate accounts, which must be straightened out and put in order by someone. Mark and Staniland would never have dreamt of sitting up at night to work; they and their unworldly brother Everett were resting peacefully. Yet these accounts must be ready to-morrow. What remained but for the worldly, money-grasping, business-loving brother to devote himself to them?

Clarence, creeping downstairs at three in the morning, found Gordon still at work. He would not leave off until he had finished, so she drew a chair close to his and helped him where she could. Then, when at last all was done, she persuaded him to go to bed, and patiently read to him until his overwrought, wideawake mind succumbed to the utter weariness of his body, and he fell asleep.

#### SIR HENRY TAYLOR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

At the end of his book Sir Henry Taylor says: "If an autobiography is to be personally interesting, it is in some measure through the reader sharing the interest which the writer takes in himself." Indeed,

the proposition is self-evident; and Sir Henry Taylor is fairly entitled to expect from the world as much of their confidence as he, on his side, has given of his own. He has spoken openly and straightforwardly, saying as much as he would wish that the world should know. "The worst of it is," he pleads, "that one cannot whisper one's biography into the ear of the little, delicate public without being overheard by the monster." We have no right to want to know everything about any man, any more than we have a right to disturb the hours of work or of meditation of our closest friends. Sir Henry Taylor is still alive. He began his autobiography in 1865; he continued it slowly until 1877, and then had it printed privately for communication to a few friends. Until the end of 1884 no other object was intended; but he gradually thought otherwise, and now it has been given to the world. There may be some who ask who was Sir Henry Taylor, and what did he do? For, though many hundreds of his volumes have been sold, not everybody reads poetry, and still less dramatic poetry. It may be said at once, briefly, that he entered the Colonial Office early in life; he wrote a few dramatic poems—Philip van Artevelde being the best known—and also some minor poems, and a few prose essays. His literary baggage is not great, but Philip van Artevelde is one of the works of which men say that they will last as long as the English language.

Henry Taylor was born on the 18th October, 1800. He came of a north of England family, and was "the son of a younger son of an insignificant squire." There had once been an estate in the family, but he inherited only the plan of it. He speaks of his father with all affection as being good, just, and true; but he tells us he was a silent, unexpansive man, who did not desire to mix much in the world, that he preferred reading to writing, and that he undervalued every gift he possessed. He taught his three children—all boys—at home. The two eldest died of typhus-fever just at the age when they were beginning to do their work in the world. Henry also caught the fever, but slightly, and he recovered. At his own request, he was sent to sea, when he was thirteen and a half years old—this was before he took the fever—but ill-health incapacitated him from real work; and, during the twelve months that he was at sea, he never once went up the rigging. When an infant, he

lost his mother. His father married again, and Mr. and Mrs. Taylor continued to live at Witton-le-Wear until they were both nearly eighty years of age. The second Mrs. Taylor was a worthy, affectionate woman, but of a melancholy disposition. Henry found his young life at home terribly dull. Writing, after a lapse of so many years, he can recollect the delight he felt one afternoon on perceiving by his watch that the time was much later than he had expected. He says he used to read with some diligence, but with no appetite. His happiest time was at night, after his father and mother had gone to bed. Then "I sate up late, sometimes in meditation, sometimes in writing verses, sometimes abandoning myself to the pleasures of existence. Though I drank nothing but tea, there was a sort of inebrity in the nocturnal state which was no doubt exhausting, and charged the days which followed with the nervous expenditure of the nights. . . . Dull almost to disease as my daily life was at Witton-le-Wear, there were three weeks of it on which I have always looked back as supremely delightful." His father and mother went from home, and for a time the lad was master of his own actions. The ineptitudes of tea were continued, and he thought himself happy. "For those never-to-be-forgotten three weeks all penalties were postponed, if not remitted, the lark took up the song from the nightingale, and my delights were prolonged without distraction of night and day, and with the intermission of but three hours of sleep begun after three in the morning." We are not called upon to say whether this plan of work was good or bad, but during those three weeks "the best of his juvenile poems, *The Cave of Ceada*, was written. The best was not bad—of its kind—nor written without a certain sort of fervour and beauty, but it was built merely upon Byron." Taylor was then from twenty-one to twenty-three years of age, and he felt the poetic temperament strongly in him. He felt a desire to write poetry, to give expression to his ideas in verse. *The Cave of Ceada*, though containing five or six hundred lines, was not his only effort. He wrote also about this time a longer poem, called *The Flight of Rhadamistus*; and also a tragedy called *Don Philip the Second*. Sir Henry Taylor insists upon a "poetic temperament" for the writer of verses, believing that without it no sort of poetry worthy of the

name can be written. When he was twenty-two he sent to the Quarterly Review a short article on Moore's Irish Melodies, and he was as much delighted as surprised, when he got a letter and a remittance in acknowledgment of his article, which was to appear in the number then about to be published. In these days Taylor made the acquaintance of Southey. The young man and the elder one—Southey was then about fifty—became fond of each other, and Taylor had a great admiration for the venerable poet. It was Southey who proposed to Taylor the subject of *Philip van Artevelde* for a drama.

When Taylor went to live in London, he brought with him two or three letters of introduction to literary men, among whom was Doctor, afterwards Sir Henry, Holland, and from him he got a letter one day, saying that "if his engagements would allow of it," it was proposed that he should be appointed to a clerkship in the Colonial Office with a salary of three hundred and fifty pounds at once, which it was expected would be shortly increased to six hundred, and which would ultimately rise to nine hundred pounds. We may say with some moral certainty of feeling, that if any piece of unexpected news could make the hair of a young man stand straight up on end, it would be the receipt of such a letter. But "nous avons changé tout cela," and the experiment is not likely to be tried. The reasons that Sir Henry Taylor gives for his good fortune are those which used to be held sufficient. "Some relatives of Dr. Holland's were old friends of my father's, and on their account he may have been glad to be of use to me; but I dare say his main object was to recommend the man whom he thought most likely to be useful." In getting rid of patronage we have also rid ourselves of the power of choosing those men who are most likely to be useful in public offices, and we also get a good many men of a kind not the most beneficial to the public service. The event happened early in 1824, when Taylor was twenty-three years of age, and immediately he devoted himself altogether to the work of his office. Of his whole official life Sir Henry Taylor speaks with the confidence of knowing himself to have been a good and efficient public servant. A considerable exercise of authority was demanded from him when he was still a young man. This was unusual; and he says that "it would, perhaps, have been still more uncontrolled, had it not been

that at this time, and for many years afterwards, my manners were against me."

In this respect he was probably not very unlike his father. He says of himself that he was "taciturn, socially sensitive, and had not the knack of knowing how to speak to people easily." He did not willingly go into society, and ten years later, after the publication of Philip van Artevelde, when he became lionised, he clearly did not like it. He says: "Of course, I, like every successful author, at his first coming forth from the jungle, was put under the pressure of London society. I had some advantages for a first appearance in it, but, taking me all in all, I was unapt." "I had real good-nature, and, as good-nature is at the root of good-breeding, I ought to have been well-bred. But I was not myself easily displeased or offended, and, giving others credit for a hardihood similar to my own, I went on my tactless way, hurting people without knowing it." Sir Henry Taylor does not say all this of himself in his own praise or dispraise, but merely because, in writing his own biography, he wishes to show to the world of to-day what he was like fifty years ago. And in another place he says: "The absence of fastidiousness made me harmless in society, but there was nothing that I know of to make me agreeable. My mind had nothing of the 'touch-and-go' movement, which alone can enable a man to take a pleasant part in light and general conversation. As to wit, I can invent it in my study, and make it spirt from the mouth of a dramatis persona, but elsewhere I have no power of producing it with any but an infelicitous effort." It is curious that this last sentence sounds almost like the echo of some lines in verse that Pierre Corneille, the French dramatist, wrote of himself more than two hundred years ago.

Mr. Taylor did not wish to call everyone his friend, but he made warm friendships in the Colonial Office, which lasted until the deaths of those whom he loved. There were "the Villiers brothers," as he calls them—the younger brothers of the late Earl of Clarendon. With two of them—Hyde Villiers and Edward Villiers—he was on terms of very affectionate friendship. And he was also intimate with James (afterwards Sir James) Stephen; with Thomas Spring-Rice, afterwards Lord Monteagle; with Sir Frederick Rogers, afterwards Lord Blackford; and with James Spedding, the author of the great

Life of Lord Bacon. One of the pleasantest parts in all biographies of our own contemporaries is to read of the friendships of men who have really liked each other and were fond of each other. We have no wish to throw a stone at Thomas Carlyle, who, with his great faults of ill-temper, was a man to be pitied; but assuredly the book now before us is more enjoyable than Mr. Froude's volumes. The only man, in his official life, of whom Sir Henry Taylor has spoken a word of disparagement is the father of the present Earl of Derby. Lord Stanley was for a time Colonial Secretary, and he and Mr. Taylor did not agree about the scheme to be submitted to Parliament for the abolition of the slave-trade. Among other friends we find mentioned Charles Austin, John Romilly (afterwards Lord Romilly), and John Stuart Mill. They all belonged to a Benthamite, doctrinaire, Radical school; but, nevertheless, as time went on, the world met them half-way, and each one of them obtained the end that he had in view.

From the way in which Sir Henry Taylor speaks of his friends, it is not difficult to perceive that he enjoyed their friendship all the more because it was not in his nature to want all the world to be his friend. And we think we can perceive the same sort of idea in relation to his own written works. In the few observations that he has made about his own plays, we see the same indications of the desire for approbation from the few rather than from the many. He tells us that "it is better to be read ten times by one reader than once by ten." We presume this refers to the reading of poetry only, not of prose. But even then we demur. To an epic poem it will apply, for the praise of one reader who has appreciated *Paradise Lost* is worth more than the shuffling, halting remarks of ten who have read it as a task; to lyric poetry we think, on the whole, it will apply also, for the enjoyment of one who really likes *L'Allegro* is keener than the half-mumbled expression of pleasure of ten whose souls or whose intellects are too dead to prize it; but to dramatic poetry, if the writer honestly, though modestly, aspires to the position of a dramatist, we cannot think the same criterion will hold good. We think that instincts of exclusiveness, or of too nice selection, are an insuperable bar to the popularity of the dramatic author, and more especially to the success of his tragedy or comedy as an acting play. His poem may

be especially charming ; may fill us with a lively emotion as we read it, seated in our armchair in our own room, with the book in our hand ; but unless the sympathies shown in the piece appeal to and are felt by us all as we sit in the theatre forming an individual part of the great audience, we do not think that the play can ever become popular. Then, for performance, come all the properties necessary for dramatic representation, some of which, no doubt, are technical, but all of which the true dramatist feels instinctively, for he is to the manner born. We think that when we test them by the standard for which they are fitted, the difference will be found between a dramatic play and a dramatic poem, and that to the latter class all of Sir Henry Taylor's four pieces belong. Philip van Artevelde is unquestionably the most widely read. It is called a "dramatic romance" in two parts. Macready tells us in his Diary how he enjoyed reading it, and how much he was moved by it. He put it on the stage—i.e., the first part—acting himself the part of Philip. But after a few nights it had to be withdrawn. Macready was a man of considerable culture, and he loved reading for its own sake ; but it would seem that his refined taste as a scholar got the better of his instinctive judgment, or Philip van Artevelde would not have appeared on the stage.

The poem first appeared in 1834, but a publisher was not found very easily. "Publishers would have nothing to say to poets, regarding them generally as an unprofitable people." Lockhart had advised Murray to undertake it, but Murray recollects that Taylor's first play, Isaac Comnenus, had not been pecuniarily successful. Our author says : "He referred me to Moxon, then commencing business. Moxon told me that when authors applied to Murray to publish works likely to involve a loss, Murray was very much in the habit of referring them to him. But as I was ready to take the risk, he, of course, was glad enough to publish." Taylor turned the matter over in his own mind. He felt within him the poet's fire and the poet's ambition, and he was determined to stand the shot and abide by the result. Like Lord Byron, he awoke one morning and found himself famous. "The sale was rapid, and as the edition had numbered only five hundred copies, another had to be put in preparation without delay. Lansdowne House and Holland House, then the great receiving-houses of

London society, opened their gates wide. In that society I found that I was going by the name of my hero, and one lady, more fashionable than well-informed, sent me an invitation addressed to Philip van Artevelde, Esquire."

Towards the end of the first volume there are some amusing anecdotes about well-known men. Old Samuel Rogers, who used to say ill-natured things, was rebuked by the widow of Sir Humphry Davy. "Now, Mr. Rogers, you are always attacking me !" "Attacking you, Lady Davy—I waste my life in defending you." Another time he said of himself : "They tell me I say ill-natured things. I have a very weak voice ; if I did not say ill-natured things, nobody would hear what I said." As Sir Henry Taylor says, the excuse itself contained a bitter satire. Archbishop Whately, too, is mentioned. He was a peculiar man in many ways. He never seemed to know what his arms and his legs were doing. From his position he would naturally sit next at a dinner-table to the wife of the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and we read that the wife of one Lord-Lieutenant had to ask him frequently at dinner to be good enough to take his foot off her lap. On one occasion he listened to a very hypothetical argument, in which there were a great many "ifs," then he strode across the room to Mr. Spring-Rice and said : "If my aunt had been a man she would have been my uncle—that's his argument."

Among Mr. Taylor's friends in the Colonial Office we have mentioned Thomas Spring-Rice, afterwards Lord Monteagle. He was under-secretary in 1834. "Mr. Spring-Rice had not been above a week or two in office before he had asked me to spend a couple of days with him in a house he had taken at Petersham. In a fortnight this visit was followed by another." Mr. Taylor got to know and to like the family, and eventually married one of Mr. Spring-Rice's daughters. At first the father had objected, saying that they knew so little of each other. The aspirant felt this to be true, and he now adds : "How little is it that is ordinarily known in such cases ! Mr. Rogers observed to me once that it matters very little whom one marries, for one finds the next day that one has married somebody else." Rogers remained always a bachelor.

In 1847, when Sir James Stephen retired from the office of Secretary of State, the post, which was worth two thousand pounds

a year, was offered to James Spedding, but he refused it, because "he could not be brought to believe what no one else doubted, that he was equal to the duties." The same post was offered to Taylor, and he refused it, because he did not wish to give up all his time and thoughts to his office, and leave none for his poetry. In 1848 or 1849, a poem, first entitled "The Virgin Widow," and afterwards "A Sicilian Summer," was published. "The play did not make much way with the world at first, and sharing the fortunes of Isaac Comnenus, Edwin the Fair, and St. Clement's Eve, its circumstances from first to last have been little more than half that of Van Artevelde. But it was eminently successful with some persons whom it was my greatest pleasure to please. I remember Charles Young, the actor, told me his habit on the stage was to single out some one of the audience who looked especially intelligent and interested, and act to him; and with me it has always been difficult to make much account of the abstraction we call the public, and my sense of success and my enjoyment of it has been chiefly when it has presented itself in the concrete." As to the success of St. Clement's Eve — his last published dramatic poem — he has given us another account a little at variance with the above. "The play was published in June, 1862, and met with a much better reception than The Virgin Widow (The Sicilian Summer). Of an edition of fifteen hundred, nine hundred have been sold in six months, and I think it was in the next six months that another edition appeared; not separately, however, but with my other plays and with my poems in a collective edition of three volumes."

We will allow ourselves one more quotation on this matter. Writing to James Spedding, our author says: "Did I tell you that my plays had made a leap, in 1868, to more than treble their previous sale? Since the beginning of this year, I am told that they have been selling at six times the rate of the years before 1868. Little as I like the public, I am beginning to think rather well of it. It must be applying its heart unto wisdom." From these passages, and from what has been already said, we may see plainly enough that the desire to please the large public had never been Taylor's wish. This we believe to be fatal to the success of a dramatist. He has told us himself: "I do not like the public." If the readers of his poems

would so multiply as to form of themselves a large public, that is a different thing. His plays were written to be read, not to be acted before the world in the theatre.

In the year 1861 the Taylors went to Bournemouth. They found there a house half built, which they bought and finished to their fancy. They were to live in it in the summer and let it in the winter, and live in the house at East Sheen in the winter, and let it in the summer. But in the migrations that took place every spring and every autumn, Mr. Taylor was found to be in the way, and was sent to Mrs. Cameron, at Freshwater. He had made the acquaintance of the Camerons a good many years before, and had become as fond of them as they were of him. He says that at Mrs. Cameron's house he "was not found to be so much in the way." "It was a house, indeed, to which everybody resorted at pleasure, and in which no man, woman, or child was ever known to be unwelcome." Mrs. Cameron was unconventional, but she was a very friendly and kind-hearted woman. "One day, I remember, a lady and gentleman and their daughter came to luncheon, and Mrs. Cameron, wishing to introduce them to me, took the liberty of asking what were their names. She had met them in the steamboat when crossing from Lymington to Yarmouth the day before, and had invited them without knowing anything about them." In a letter to Mr. Taylor, speaking of Tennyson, Mrs. Cameron says: "Alfred talked very pleasantly that evening to Annie Thackeray and to L. S. He spoke of Jane Austen, as James Spedding does, as next to Shakespeare! I can never imagine what they mean when they say such things." Some of us may remember that Macaulay, too, places Miss Austen as nearest to Shakespeare in one particular faculty. We refer to his essay on Madame d'Arblay, towards the end. That essay, however, was written in 1842, before *Vanity Fair* or *Esmond* had appeared. Macaulay's argument stretches over four or five pages, but the purport of it is that, in the true portraiture of men and women having no one passion that overrules and determines all the rest—and here Macaulay instances a dozen of Shakespeare's characters who, he maintains, are not governed by one dominant passion—he has no hesitation in placing Jane Austen as nearest to Shakespeare. Mrs. Cameron then goes on to speak of Tennyson: "He

said he believed every crime and every vice in the world were connected with the passion for autographs, and anecdotes, and records ; that the desiring anecdotes and the acquaintance with the lives of great men was treating them like pigs to be ripped open for the public ; that he knew he himself should be ripped open like a pig ; that he knew nothing of Jane Austen ; and that there were no letters of Shakespeare's or of Jane Austen's, that they had been ripped open like pigs." It is, at any rate, a genuine enthusiasm that induces most people to know something about great authors and famous poets. But there are poets of a lesser celebrity as to whom many of us feel—or we used to feel fifty years ago—compelled to read for duty's sake.

Lord Melbourne said of Crabbe : " I am so glad when one of those fellows dies, because then one has his works complete on one's shelves, and there's an end of him." But there is another class of poets still less fortunate in the world's estimation—those whose poetry does not find a place on many shelves. Sir Henry Taylor tells us—and this is, perhaps, the least wise thing in his volumes—that his friend Aubrey de Vere "observed, the other day, with some justice, that he (De Vere) could not be considered a poor man, inasmuch as it was in his power at any moment to double his income, simply by laying down his pen." It may be a little ill-natured of us to repeat this story against the unfortunate poet ; for it is sad to think how many there have been whose poetical aspirations have hardly felt more of reality than a few hours of painful existence.

For ourselves we have read Sir Henry Taylor's autobiography with much pleasure as the picture of an honourable life made more glorious by the noble use of great poetical gifts. Taylor took a just pride in the possession of his powers, and any reader of his poems may perceive that in their composition he felt a lively enjoyment. In 1862, shortly after he had finished his last play, *St. Clement's Eve*, the University of Oxford honoured him by making him a D.C.L. ; and a few years before his retirement from the Colonial Office he was knighted. He has given us an account of the preliminaries to this affair, and it is so amusing that we will quote it. " I got a summons to attend the Queen at Windsor the next day for an investiture of St. Michael and St. George, and I had not a rag of court dress. A

thousand tailors were set to work, however, and, in exactly twenty-four hours, I found myself wanting nothing except a clean shirt and a white cravat. Whilst I was dressing in the tailor's shop skirmishers were thrown out, and a shirt was seized and secured. My pocket-handkerchief was converted into a cravat, and I reached the train for Windsor just in time."

He retired from the Colonial Office in 1872, having been a public servant of the Crown for forty-nine years. There had been a question of offering a peerage to Mr. Taylor before he was knighted, but as the House of Lords had already decided against life peerages—in the case of Lord Wensleydale—the question fell through and was allowed to drop.

One very old friend—Lord Romilly—he saw again in London in the year 1875, and he speaks of him with the admiration of which a warm nature only is capable. Lord Romilly wanted Sir Henry Taylor to belong to The Club. It was long since Taylor had read his *Boswell*, and the words conveyed to his mind no definite meaning. At length, " my election was announced to me in the terms which were originally dictated by Gibbon, and had been used ever since : ' Sir, I have the pleasure to inform you that you had last night the honour to be elected a member of THE CLUB.' I was very sensible of the honour, and thought that Gibbon had done quite right to speak out." Sir Henry Taylor was only able to be at one of The Club dinners. He says, " There were ten besides myself. Literature and learning were represented by the editors of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Reviews*, and by Lecky and Lord Acton ; the Church by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dean of Westminster ; the law by Lord Romilly ; statecraft by Lord Derby and Spencer Walpole ; and our dukes by the Duke of Cleveland. It was a curious social combination, and I thought it as agreeable as a dinner could be from which youth and women were absent."

#### THE CENTENARY OF THE BELLS.

ST. MARY'S, WAREHAM, IN DORSETSHIRE.

For a hundred sweet, sad years,  
Ebb of spring, bright summer's flow,  
Bitter winter, autumn's tears,  
Seasons born that they may go ;  
Ringing soft, or loud, or fast,  
Tolling slowly for the past,  
Ringing blithely for the bride,  
Tolling low for all who've died.  
In yon turret ceaselessly,  
They have rung, let what will be !

Listen, on the light wild breeze,  
How the merry chimes resound !  
Battles won cause peals like these,  
Tell the tale to all around.  
Listen ! 'tis the death-bell's toll,  
Let the dreary echo roll.  
Mixed are ever joy and pain,  
Tears and smiles are one again.  
In yon turret ceaselessly,  
Chimes are rung, let what will be !  
Welcome to the bonnie bride !  
Love like this can never die !  
Sorrow sits his hearth beside.  
In the churchyard doth she lie ;  
E'er we've dried our weeping tears,  
Pass the swift, unceasing years ;  
Once more chime the bells o'erthe  
And forgotten sleep the dead.  
In yon turret ceaselessly  
Ring the bells, let what will be !  
'Tis the peaceful Sunday morn.  
Ring, oh bells ! across the lea ;  
For another week is born,  
Bringing toil, or bringing glee.  
Listen to the happy chime,  
Like some half-forgotten rhyme.  
Toil or pleasure, bliss or bane,  
Twined and twisted in one strain  
From yon turret ceaselessly,  
Telling death and life must be !

## WHICH OF THEM ?

## A STORY IN TEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER X.

OF course, there must be explanations, and an epilogue ; but fortunately there is not much to be related in that awkward pluperfect tense which is the ruin of stories.

When Mr. Picton had heard Lucy's confession, he became seriously uneasy at Alan's absence. Yorkshire had certainly received her note—the one of which Kensington was in possession—for there was his answer to vouch for it ; and whether he had disappeared before his marriage, and been personated by one of his cousins, or whether he had actually been the bridegroom, and then never returned to claim his bride, it was equally certain that he was not absent with his own goodwill, leaving no word of explanation behind.

Having other affairs to attend to besides the Marstons', Mr. Picton thought it best to telegraph to Yorkshire's father, the Rev. Henry Marston, for information and instructions. But the parsonage was in an out-of-the-way village, a long way from a telegraph-office ; the message was delayed on its way, and it was not until late in the afternoon that the yellow envelope brought dismay into the quiet circle. Then Mr. Marston determined to start for London by the night-train, and did so. Dusk was gathering over the Yorkshire moors when he kissed his pale wife and tearful daughters, left at home to the woman's

part of keeping the heartache warm. The dusk of a November morning had not lifted itself from the streets of London when the train at last brought him in among them. In those long, restless hours, when the fever of waking anxiety alternated with the misery of confused dreams, and short, disappointing blanks of unconsciousness, which seemed as if they must have been long, but were not, the poor father grew to feel as if it had always been dark, and always would be. The gloom of London seemed to him like the gloom which had suddenly fallen over the quiet afternoon sunshine of his life, in this terrible anxiety about the well-being—even the life—of his beloved son. He hurried into a cab, and ordered the driver to go to Kensington's chambers as fast as possible ; and all the way he kept looking eagerly to one side and the other, that he might not miss a chance of seeing his boy among the dull figures that hurried or plodded along to their daily work, with heads down, in the moist, dismal air.

The cab was not five minutes from its destination, when Mr. Marston rattled wildly at the top, flung open the doors, and, almost before the astonished driver could pull his horse to a stop, had leaped out at the risk of his life, and was running back up the street. Turning round to pursue his "fare," the cabman saw him overtake a curious figure—a tall young man, with cloths wrapped round his head, and a chimney-pot hat set on above, who was staggering along, and catching at the area-railings to support himself as he went. The clergyman seized him by the arm, and he turned round, almost falling with the shock ; and then there was a rapturous, confused minute of recognition, and astonishment, and relief, and dismay, and gladness, which between Frenchmen would have expressed itself in an embrace, but between two Englishmen ended in squeezing each other's hands very tightly and looking unutterable things.

The cabman soon recovered his lawful prey, and they drove to an hotel, where Alan bathed, breakfasted, and told his story. The only part of it that we do not know already is soon related.

He had for some time past been awaking at intervals, though always relapsing into unconsciousness after taking a dose from Horton. But his later wakings had begun with a dreamy, half-conscious period, in which he seemed to be asleep, but was yet capable of understanding a great deal of

what was going on; and in these the past began to return to him, and he felt a growing desire to get up and go to Lucy. When he opened his eyes, and Horton came to him with food, he would say something about getting up; but Horton always answered that he was not well enough, and then came that inevitable dose, and the equally inevitable drowsiness that swallowed up all thought and will.

But on the Thursday night Horton grew tired of his constant guard. He thought that Kensington might very well take his share of the work, and, as he was sleeping in the next room, get up if the patient stirred, give him some broth first, and some laudanum afterwards. Kensington did not much care for the part of sick-nurse, but by this time he was very much afraid of resisting Horton, and he consented. Horton had had no experience in the use of opiates, and he supposed that he had only to keep on giving Alan as much laudanum as he chose, in order to keep him asleep for as long as he chose. So he administered a double dose, entirely indifferent as to whether or not it carried Yorkshire over the border, and went off for a good night's rest, leaving Kensington in charge. It did not occur to him that the result would be the exact opposite of his intentions. He had overdone his treatment, and the final consequence was that early in the morning, Yorkshire was lying broad awake, listening to the snoring of Kensington next door, and looking at his own clothes tossed in a heap in one corner. A wild longing came over him for Lucy and liberty, a certainty that if Horton came back with his doses he should never see either again; and he struggled out of bed, and with shaking hands managed to dress himself somehow. During the process, the old woman who "did up" Kensington's sitting-room, and got his breakfast, and who had a key of the outer door of the chambers, arrived, and began her operations, so that Yorkshire's way of escape was clear. Kensington still slumbered on, while Yorkshire buttoned his overcoat together, caught up his hat, forgetful of the wet cloths that still wrapped his head, slipped out and downstairs, and emerged into the street, looking like a modern Lazarus only half resuscitated. He was wondering whether he would faint before he got to a cabstand, or be taken up for drunkenness, when he felt a grip upon his arm which at first he took for that of a policeman, and turned round to see his father.

Mr. Marston would not hear of Alan's making an exertion until he had seen a doctor, of a rather different class from his last medical attendant. This gentleman was of opinion that if there had ever been any concussion of the brain, it must have been slight, and that there was now nothing the matter with him but the effects of excessive opiates and want of food. Considering the possibility of some shock to the brain, it would be desirable that he should keep as quiet as could be for a few days; but, seeing that quiet was not promoted by mental anxiety, it would be best that he should be permitted at present to see his wife, as he appeared exceedingly desirous of doing.

"And as I should have done, my darling, whether he gave leave or not," explained Alan when relating his adventures to Lucy; "but I thought I might as well do things properly, and be a good boy as long as they gave me no reason for being bad."

Fortified by this opinion, Mr. Marston and Yorkshire set off for Russell Square, and arrived there as is related in our last chapter.

A good deal of explanation and discussion had to be gone through before everything was quite clear to everybody, and before the future course of events was decided. Kensington was allowed to make his escape, and dispose of himself as he would, without any interference; his fate was sure to be as miserable as he deserved. Brixton insisted on being upon the friendliest terms with Yorkshire, reminding everybody that he had always said that Kensington's claim to be Lucy's husband was an imposture. If anybody ventured—as Mr. Picton once did—to remind him that his own was an equal imposture, he opened his eyes widely, and denied that he had ever made any claim at all.

It was true that that silly old woman—Mrs. White—had mistaken Yorkshire for him, having her head full of the undoubted fact that he was his uncle's chosen heir; but he begged that Mr. Picton would quote a single word that he had said about having married Miss Scott. He had said that Kensington was an impostor, and so he was, and that he—Brixton—was the right man, and so he was, by Mr. Marston's decision. But Lucy had chosen for herself, and now he only wished happiness to her and his cousin, whom he heartily welcomed back to life and his good luck.

Mr. Picton found that he could not make the required quotation, and Yorkshire, who had never realised Brixton's half-hearted attempt to appropriate Lucy and her dower, was much impressed by the generosity of his present attitude. In fact, he felt himself a Jacob towards his cousin. It was a great shock to his mind when he discovered that he had become his uncle's heir by a trick, and though he did not reproach Lucy with having stolen their happiness, yet his enjoyment in their reunion, and the fair prospect before them, was so evidently dashed that it sent a pang through her heart and conscience. But, as she said often to him, and still more often to herself, what else could she have done? And it was not an easy question to answer.

Yorkshire's first impulse was to surrender all the property to Brixton, to whom Mr. Marston had destined it, reserving only a thousand pounds to enable himself and Lucy to start in Canada. But both his father and Mr. Picton descended on him in force, and reminded him that according to all his uncle's arrangements, Lucy was a co-heiress in the estate, and was intended to enjoy it, and that his being her husband gave him no right to make Brixton a present of her property, and condemn her to a life of hardships, instead of the easy and pleasant existence to which she had been accustomed, and which Mr. Marston designed to perpetuate for her. In vain did Lucy protest that she was quite willing—of her own free will—to do whatever Alan thought right. Mr. Picton put aside her protestations with a wave of his hand.

"You think so now, my dear madam," he replied; "but wait till you are trying to milk your cows, with the thermometer Heaven knows how many degrees below zero, and two of the children sick, and no doctor within forty miles—you won't be so sure of your husband's infallibility then."

Lucy blushed, shivered, and held her hands to the fire. Alan "looked on this picture and on that," and surrendered. Not altogether, though; for he did not like the feeling of having supplanted Brixton "these two times."

The funeral was celebrated with due solemnity; the two nephews and their fathers following the bier as mourners. Brixton wept copiously; was it for his uncle or for his inheritance? After the ceremony, when all the guests outside the

family—except the indispensable Mr. Picton—had departed, Yorkshire made a statement to his assembled relations. It was in this wise:

"I don't need to make any explanation to you all of the many strange things, mistakes, accidents, and so on, that have happened lately in our family. About some of them the least said is soonest mended; and the best thing we can do is to forget all the bother as fast as possible. But we must get it put straight first, as far as it can be done. It has all turned out a great deal too well for me. I have got the best wife in the world, and I have got all my uncle's money and business—much more money than I want, and much more business than I can manage. It is a great grief to me to find that he did not really intend either of them for me, but for my cousin here. However, I have the comfort of knowing that he was really fond of me, as I was of him; though he thought—quite rightly—that Brixton was a better man to look after his work, and also—in which I can't so well agree with him—a better man to look after his niece. I can't now carry out altogether my uncle's wishes. I can't give Brixton the best thing that I have won, and I wouldn't if I could. Neither can I give away all the inheritance, which our uncle intended for her, if not for me. But I have decided, and she quite agrees with me, to make over to Brixton the business, and all connected with it, as well as this house, keeping for myself Woodlands, the farm attached to it, and everything there. The furniture remains in each house as it is, except any special articles which my wife may wish for in this. The money in the bank, railway shares, and other investments, and the plate, we shall equally divide between us. All that I retain of my uncle's property is to be absolutely settled on my wife. And I request Mr. Picton to make all legal arrangements for carrying out this transfer as soon as possible."

So the astonished Brixton found himself, after all, Alan Marston, of Gracechurch Street, City. He reached the summit of his ambition while he was still young enough to enjoy it, and he enjoyed it intensely. He was rather too fond of talking about what was expected from a man in his position, but he usually did it too. He did one very injudicious thing at the outset of his career in Gracechurch Street; he offered a clerkship at a considerably better salary to the man who had

been immediately senior to him at Messrs. Timmins's. He thus trampled on the just expectations of deserving juniors in his own office ; but the pleasure he derived from giving orders to that man was so intense as to compensate for much hurting of other people's feelings. But, on the whole, he was a good master, and not unpopular among his employés ; and he was a first-rate man of business, and carried the name of Alan Marston even higher than it had been held before. Mrs. White was a thorn in his side. He told her pettishly that she had made a fool of him, and the sight of her continually reminded him of that unpleasant circumstance. But she was not a person easily to be got rid of, and she ruled supreme in his house, until he called in a potent ally. A second Mrs. Alan Marston dispensed with Mrs. White's services in Russell Square, as easily as Lucy was doing in Surrey. Her subsequent career was prosperous, and it was embellished by a permanent grievance in her treatment by the Marston family.

Alan of Woodlands — no longer of Yorkshire — was never so rich as his London cousin, but he was, probably, even happier, having a more delicate capacity for happiness. He farmed, he hunted, he shot, he became a J.P., and fulfilled all the duties of a country gentleman who is not burdened with a large estate. What those are, let others gifted with more microscopic vision define ; but this I fearlessly assert, that Alan executed them conscientiously. Lucy, no longer kept in subjection, but moving in freedom, and crowned with responsibility, developed all her finer qualities, and taught her children courage and straightforwardness.

The two Mrs. Alan Marstones did not suit each other very well, though they were perfectly friendly ; and the intercourse between the houses was limited to an annual fortnight spent by the country folk in Russell Square in May, and another spent by the Londoners at Woodlands some time in the summer.

Mr. Marston of Gracechurch Street did not care to go down in September to shoot his cousin's partridges. There were as many of them as ever, but, probably, none the more for his absence. His path in life was now so distinct from that of Alan of Woodlands that there seldom arose any confusion between them, and it was only on very trivial occasions that anyone now needed to ask the question which had once been so hotly debated — Which of Them ?

### ALONG THAMES SHORE.

WITH all its nearness to the great centre of human activity, there is something lonely in the appearance of Rotherhithe as seen by the murky light of a winter's day. The railway-station itself is quiet and vault-like, and there are no vehicles to be seen outside — no vehicles, and very few people, and these mostly young people, who are making the most of their leisure by running about, dirty and cheerful, all over the road, with a fearless confidence that argues the absence of cabs and omnibuses. There are no streets to speak of, but only clusters of low sheds and small, mean-looking houses, and when streets are discovered, they prove to be mere "no thoroughfares," ending either in a monstrous pile of timber or the tall palisading of a dock. In fact, there are few such secluded places as Rotherhithe, which is just a narrow strip of river-shore, hemmed in by the Thames on one hand and the Surrey Docks on the other — a place that nobody thinks of visiting for pleasure, and whose business transactions are chiefly with the still waters of the docks on one side, and the busy river, with its ceaseless ebb and flow, on the other.

Now, the name of the place had suggested hopes and expectations — not, indeed, of anything rich or rare, but of something in the way of a hythe — an open shore with the river flowing by, a quaint row of houses looking upon the scene, and possibly a quiet little riverside public-house, frequented by pilots and sea-captains, and a glimpse of gables and high-pitched roofs in the distance. But, as it proves, there is nothing in the way of an open shore — the river-bank is shut in by lofty walls and high palings, and only here and there some narrow opening, leading to some little-used public landing-place or stairs, permits a glimpse of the darkly-flowing river beyond. Not an inviting glimpse either just now, for the river is at dead low water, with a broad muddy margin, across which stretch the remains of a causeway, covered with slime, while two or three patched and rotten boats are wallowing in the mud. And yet the half of the street that faces the river has quite the appearance of once having looked over the river, and even now from the upper windows perhaps a glimpse may be had of masts and funnels when the tide is high. For there is still the air of a quiet river

settlement about the neighbourhood. Here are pleasant little wooden houses, for instance, with their snug, homely, weather-boarded sides, all wooden-panelled within, and through the half-opened door a glimpse of funny corkscrew staircases—just such doll's-houses as please the minds of river and seafaring men. And there is a wonderful air of propriety, too, about these little wooden houses; neat little parlours with flowers in the windows, snug crimson curtains, spotless muslin blinds. It seems as if people had gone on living here for generations with as little change as possible, not far removed, and yet some way cut off from the bustle of modern life, a favoured little strip of land that the tide of affairs has scarcely reached.

And the farther we go, the more this old-world feeling comes over us. Here are inns, too, with quaint old signs, such as bold buccaneers may have smoked their quaint Dutch pipes under. Here is one nice old public-house standing by itself, weather-boarded and high-gabled, which has a peep all to itself of a strip of river with ships and boats, and which must have been thronged with master-mariners and able seamen in the good old times, when, perhaps, the royal fleet lay moored in the river, and the Royal Harry came sailing by, or the Elizabeth Jonah, flying all her colours, or Arke Rawleigh, with her gallant captain on board, bound for the Spanish Main; though, no doubt, it was quiet as death, and with only a few hobbling old veterans smoking in its sanded parlours as the press-gang dashed in with a rush, pursued with shouts and execrations by all the women of the neighbourhood. The signs, too, of the inns have the same old-world flavour. Here is Ship Argo, that surely must have borne that name from the classic age of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson; and Swallow Galley—that must have been with the fleet that sailed out to attack the Armada.

It is strange, indeed, to see how little alteration time has made in this secluded region. Here is an old map of St. Mary, Rotherhithe, a mere strip of a parish along the river bank, showing where a road cuts across the peninsula to Deptford, but otherwise with no communication with the rest of the world except by way of the river, while to the river access is easy by means of numerous stairs. There are Mill Stairs, and Church Stairs, King and Queen Stairs, Elephant Stairs, Shepherd and Dog Stairs, Globe Stairs; most

of them, no doubt, connected with taverns bearing similar signs. "Redrif Stairs" remind us that here in the name of Redrif is the popular rendering of Rotherhithe. Now, at the time this map was made, the Surrey Docks, which now with their entrances and sluices make so many islands of old Rotherhithe, had no existence, and the ground they occupy was so much marsh and pasture. We have an account, indeed, of a walk across these fields by a worthy divine of a couple of centuries ago, writing to his friend, Samuel Pepys. He had one Sunday preached at Redriff for a friend, and next morning walked with him over the fields to Lambeth. "He showed me in the passage divers remains of the old channel which had heretofore been made from Redriff to Lambeth for diverting the Thames whilst London Bridge was building all in a straight line, as near it, but with great intervals which had long since been filled up."

We may very much doubt whether the age in which Old London Bridge was built was capable of such an enormous task as diverting the course of the Thames. But there may very well have been some old channel here at the back, cutting off this great bend of the river. King Canute has the credit of having made a canal to carry his galleys round about London Bridge, which the beleaguered citizens had made impassable, and so to command the upper part of the river. Anyway, the countrymen of Canute are still thick upon the ground just here, or rather upon the waters, for these docks that occupy the bed of the old channel are thronged by the ships of the hardy Norsemen. Their timber-ships contribute the chief of the masts and sails that still find their way up the river, and at festive times the taverns along the other side of the docks are as likely to show the white cross of Norway or the red cross of Denmark as our own familiar ensign. But just now the docks are well-nigh empty, and the desolateness of their aspect suggests how the fiords are now all frozen up, and the white snow thickly piled on the branches of the tall pines—those tall trees that shall presently fall beneath the axe, and find their way, topped and squared, to float idly beneath a scum of soot and sawdust in the Surrey Docks.

The Scandinavian element, however, develops itself on the other side of the docks, where trams and railways give access to the busy world. Here at Rother-

hithe everything remains English. No tramway encroaches on the quietude of the scene, no omnibus ; the sight of a hansom is unknown, and just now the river is equally quiet. Something in the way of a pier-head breaks the monotony of the street, and here the river is in full view—the river at dead low water far below, a narrow channel between broad, flat mud-banks, with barges lying all aground on their broad, flat bottoms. On the other side rise the high bank of Stepney, with its white church shining out of the haze, the maze of houses about Ratcliffe, and the long, low shore of Wapping. It is the river pure and simple, reduced to its very lowest denomination, with not one distinctive feature to mark its banks, except here and there the tower of a church or the roof of some warehouse or factory towering above its neighbours. For all this dull depression of the scene, there is a kind of antidote in the fact that the tide has turned. Hardly as yet is the change perceptible, but an old basket that has occupied the channel and become a striking object in the absence of other craft, has suddenly stopped in its progress towards the Nore, has taken a turn or two, and then begun to drift slowly upwards. And by the time the next swing-bridge and dock-entrance is reached, there are already signs of life among the waterside population. The bridge looks down upon a lock, whose gates are now closed so that the barges therein float high above the surface of the river. The lock seems in a regular jam with barges, and broad bluff hoyos, with their masts and great red sails lying all of a tangle on their decks, while the interstices are filled up with rafts of timber and solitary pine-logs bobbing about and struggling to the surface where they can. And among all these sturdy craft, which, if they stick to the river mostly, are not afraid of a blusterous gale about the Nore, or a rough and tumble in the fierce tideway about Sheerness ; among all these craft that are free of the Thames and seem capable of looking after themselves, there floats a narrow inland barge with a high-pitched roof—such a one as you associate with a quiet rural scene in the Midlands—the slow canal, the yellow-blossomed vale.

This barge is painted green as to the poop, with ornamental touches here and there, showing a feeling for artistic decoration, although a good deal battered and rubbed owing to the course of time

and the stress of rainy days and hot sunshine intermixed ; and the name of the owner is conspicuously painted upon the high poop—W. F. Oster, Leeds, Number Ten Thousand and Thirty-two. These last figures suggest a certain pardonable exaggeration. It is difficult to believe that Mr. Oster owns ten thousand barges odd, or anything like it. The nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine are probably as yet in embryo ; but even with this deduction the total would be a respectable one. And from Leeds, too, of all places in the world ! How did that respectable canal-barge, whose builder seems to have had a carving-knife in his eye when he laid down the lines of her model—so crank, and narrow, and altogether on edge is she—say how did she get here ? Who is there with a sufficiently accurate knowledge of our inland navigations to map out her progress from Leeds, Yorkshire ? Aye, but there's the rub—is it Leeds in Yorkshire, or perchance Leeds in Kent, from which barge Number Ten Thousand and Thirty-two hails ? Came she by the silver Medway into the still more silvery Thames, from under the walls of that pleasant old castle, recalling the Culpeppers and Fairfaxes of long, long ago ? It might be worth while to hail the barge and satisfy our curiosity at the fountain-head. But she lies there quite silent and deserted, her hatches battened down—lies like a painted ship—painted green, you will remember, a once vivid green, with pickings out in various rainbow hues—upon a painted ocean of deals, and hoyos, and scum of sawdust and shavings.

But the painted ocean itself begins to show signs of commotion, for the tide is beginning to make in earnest, and all who mean to go out this tide are making ready to depart. The great dock-basin, covered with floating timber, is shut out, and the craft in the lock are wedged together more tightly than ever ; but they all mean sailing with the tide, and windlasses are clanking, while the heavy masts, with their cumber of rigging, are hoisted slowly upwards, and the great red sails flap idly in the breeze. As if some spell had been broken, all is now bustle and animation, where before was silence and repose. Men are jumping about from raft to raft among the timber, pushing here and hauling there, and shouting with all their might, and prodding with hooks, and pulling with ropes, as if time and tide had caught them unawares and passed them, and it wanted hard work

to be even with them again. But the spell still hangs unbroken about the barge from Leeds. Nothing is stirring with her, and the men who are at work upon the timber-rafts jump upon her and over her as if she, too, were but a painted log.

But presently the little green doors, or hatchways, to speak more nautically, of the barge are flung open, and a woman comes half-way up the ladder, and looks about her. A handsome, brown-faced woman is she, with a white sun-bonnet on her head, and a little gay tartan shawl about her neck, and otherwise comfortably and warmly clad ; and the flaps of the sun-bonnet and the ends of the shawl flutter briskly in the blustering gusts of wind. A glimpse down the open hatchway reveals the snuggest possible of little cabins—rather a cabinet than a cabin—with wonderful knobs and handles everywhere to fittings of polished wood. The corner of a bed, too, is visible, covered with a figured counterpane, while a glass lamp swings overhead, and everything is as neat and tidy as hands can make it.

Looking about her for a while, shading her eyes with her strong, but shapely brown hand, the woman in the sun-bonnet, which gleams strangely white in the yellow, foggy tinge that characterises the rest of the world—the woman, with an air at once genial and critical, shakes her head, and seems to say, “ Well, if this is your London, it doesn’t visibly outshine Leeds.” And then, having taken in the surrounding circumstances, she sings out in a loud, clear voice : “ John, slack off yon rope.”

The tone of the voice at once settles the question of the nationality, or, more strictly speaking, the shirealty of the barge. That voice hails from north of the Trent, and is as conspicuous in its way among the thin and reedy utterances of the rest of us as the white sun-bonnet and bright tartan shawl are in this foggy, yellow scene. But although the voice is firm and powerful, it is raised more in the way of entreaty or advice than of command. For John has made his appearance at the extreme end of the barge, where he has taken a seat upon the cargo, and is lighting his pipe in the most leisurely way. A man in a Jim-Crow hat of the ancient Saxon type, such as the jolly waggoner was accustomed to wear, and a suit of brown fustian, a plain, homely figure from the Midlands, and, like the barge, more in keeping with green pastures and soft woodlands than with these troubled waters and busy wharves.

“ John, thou’dst better slack off yon rope,” repeats the woman, who is evidently John’s wife, and not without some old-fashioned notions, said to linger still in secluded villages, about the subservience of the wife to the husband. John, however, perhaps imbued with the same notions, treats his wife’s suggestions with silent indifference. And then somebody shouts an order about the paddles ; and, forthwith, a man on each side of the lock, turning a winch, seem to let down the whole painted ocean, as if by machinery. Down they go with easy gliding motion—barges, rafts, and hoy, and without a hitch in the whole proceeding. All goes by clockwork, indeed, except that hatchet-featured barge from Leeds, which somehow gets hitched up when three parts to the bottom of the well. That rope that John would not slack off has proved itself, indeed, too taut ; if the hawser should be strong enough, it seems as if the barge must inevitably be hauled out of the water bodily and hang there by the heels, while John and his wife and the cargo trickle out at the other end. John, however, proves equal to the occasion. He moves not a peg, but calmly awaits events. The woman looks on silently, with something like triumph in her eyes. At the last moment somebody slips along the gate and slacks off the rope, and the barge, free from perils, continues its interrupted descent. The brown-faced woman disappears into her cabin, and the gleam of her sunburnt face is seen no more.

And so the little world of boats and barges sinks lower and lower, till we idlers on the bridge can look right down their stove-pipes and see where the smoke comes from ; while directly below us is the gaily-painted barge from Leeds, whose opened hatchways reveal a pleasant little interior. In the neat little cabin, all over knobs and handles, the brown-faced woman, who has laid aside her sun-bonnet, is sitting opposite a brown-faced baby, who is kicking, and sprawling, and crowing with pleasure, while the proud mother makes playful drives and lunges at him with all happiness and delight, as if the whole world were contained within that little highly-varnished box afloat—and a supremely jolly and pleasant world into the bargain.

“ There’s many a worse little ‘ome than that ashore,” mutters a loafer, who is waiting about in the hope of getting a job. And truly unconscious of the gallery of spectators overhead, this little scene goes

on in the dark and dripping dock, a happy speck of light in the murky wilderness about.

But now the tide is making up in hot haste; a brown turbulent flood, with greasy patches here and there suffused with colour, where they catch reflections from the painted barges or the red sails of the hoyas, for with the tide a never-ending flotilla is hastening upwards. And so the lock-gates are thrown open, and the rafts and barges are turned helter-skelter into the stream.

And away goes the barge from Leeds, that does not want to go up the river at all, not that way lies Leeds, but quite otherwise. John is all alive now, and has got out the long pole, but can reach no bottom, and looks wildly about him, and seems inclined to tear his hair. The brown-faced woman is at her post, and she handles the tiller with all the dexterity of a master mariner, her sun-bonnet and gay tartan floating wildly in the air. But you cannot drive a boat against wind and tide with the tiller only. And so Leeds goes adrift; which is like going to sea on a carving-knife, eddies twisting, and tide rushing, and great steamers now floundering and booming in all directions. John may wish himself placidly tracking along the Grand Junction Canal at this moment. But there is one chance for him; a big wooden cage at the mouth of the dock affords a purchase for his long boat-hook.

"Hold fast there, and haul round!" cry the dock-keepers rather unnecessarily, for John is holding fast with all his might, but Father Thames is pulling, too, and pulling double. John holds on to the very last, till he is all but overboard, and then lets go, and away go barge, brown baby, and brown woman, the last still manfully at the helm, her shawl and sun-bonnet fluttering among the masts and sails, and so away on the brown tide.

Not very far, however, as it happens, for a friendly bargee, who is hanging safely to anchor, heaves a line to John, who catches it, and the barge from Leeds is drawn safely alongside.

Up to this moment the brown-faced woman has been silent; the baby might roar below, the winds and the waves might storm above, silent and faithful she stuck to the helm, obedient to every nod and gesture of her commander John; but now the danger was over, she straightened up her sun-bonnet, arranged her tartan shawl with an air, and prepared to descend to

her baby. But one Parthian shot she discharged:

"John," she cried, "if you'd only slackened off that rope, now, as I told you."

Somehow, after losing sight of the green barge, the way appears rather dull and dreary, not much enlivened even when we come to a tavern called The Horns, with an ancient ferry, and a crazy wooden landing-stage, everything decayed and time-worn, as if this were some half-savage wild, though here are memories of the days when the navy was fitted out from these banks—such as Ordnance Wharf and others—memories ranging from Samuel Pepys and the Duke of York to Nelson of the Nile and the Sailor King.

It is difficult to say where Rotherhithe ends and Deptford begins, but when once in the thick of the latter, the difference is rather remarkable. For here begins one of the old, narrow, evil-looking sailors' towns, with dreary slums and cut-throat looking lanes—where Polly, and Sally, and Sue hang about the doors dishevelled, and flout the passers-by. But there are redeeming points about Deptford, such as a little bit of Creek-road, and farther on a perfect little street of the eighteenth century, with nice carved door-heads, all quaint and real. A bit of faint sunshine streaming upon the red-brick walls, recalls the true feeling of the place. Evelyn and Pepys, walking down the street, grown a little old and shaky, and stared at as old-fashioned, would not be out of keeping. And the tavern, too, The King of Prussia, bears a sort of history in its sign, and the man who is busy polishing the windows would answer to "Drawer!" surely, if you called him.

As for Evelyn, who lived at Sayes Court, close by—the Court with the famous holly-hedge through which Czar Peter drove his wheelbarrow—his name—Evelyn's, that is—still is kept in mind by Evelyn Street, where a tramcar is waiting at the corner that will carry you to Jamaica, and other parts unknown. Then there is a water-gate leading down to the river, with old-fashioned houses scattered about which have seen much better days, and St. Nicholas Church, standing forlornly in a dismal neighbourhood, with a weather-worn tower and a pathetically ugly brick tabernacle attached to it. There is merit, however, in the large skulls and crossbones that grin at you over the gateway, but it is merit of a weird and depressing character.

Nor is Deptford Creek a more enlivening

object, although now full to the brim, and with two or three good-sized steamers moored in the basin, which looks several sizes too small for them. And there is a brig lying there, named the *Tiger*, which may be a lineal descendant of the craft that was chartered for Aleppo long ago.

But altogether it is a relief to turn one's back upon Deptford, and work back along the river-way to Rotherhithe, where now all the swing-bridges are up, and sea-going steamers are paddling slowly across the roadway, their red and black funnels obscuring the signs of the public-houses in the road beyond. And at each bridge waits a little knot of people and vehicles, workmen going back to work from their dinners, a waggon-load of deals, a carter's cart, the dogcart of a traveller in the timber-line, the doctor's phaeton; and then the bridge swings round again, and all move on, to be caught again and detained by another bluff-nosed steamer at the next bridge.

There is glorious idling, too, on the pier-heads, with the steamers working in, their sides well battered with the waves, and everybody glad to be in port again; and such are vastly more important affairs than the green barge from Leeds and its tiny crew. And yet our thoughts still revert to the last glimpse of that fluttering sunbonnet. Let us hope that the gallant craft has got safely across the river to the canal-basin, and is by this time sailing over placid waters, while the tea-kettle sings a merry song in the little varnished cabin.

## LADY LOVELACE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JUDITH WINNE," ETC., ETC.

### CHAPTER L.

So the London season wore itself away, the usual number of wax-candles were consumed at the inevitable balls, the usual number at the equally inevitable funerals. The bells of St. George's Church clanged over the heads of the usual number of brides, and the usual number of divorce cases came on in their usual course for hearing, and people gossiped, and flirted, and danced till their tongues and their feet grew tired, and they thought with delight, "Goodwood is coming and we are going, that Heaven, at last!"

There were also, as usual, just one or two things people decided were worth doing before they shook their wings and took

flight—a dinner or so to be eaten in distinguished company; a ball or two worth the trouble of a new dress.

Among the latter most certainly was classed Miss Yorke's ball, for which invitations had been issued about six weeks previously.

Miss Yorke had by this time not only well-established her reputation as the beauty of the season, but also (a yet more difficult achievement) the reputation for a "taste and a refinement somewhat out of the common"—that is to say, everything she chose to do was reputed to be well conceived and well executed. Hence as a matter of common-sense and reason her one ball, which she chose to give towards the close of the season, would be perfect—nothing less, people said—as regarded the rooms, the company, the music, the supper, everything.

Assuredly neither pains nor money was spared to render it so. Uncle Hugh's bankers must have wondered over the heavy cheques he was always drawing upon them in those days. The old gentleman himself wondered over them too whenever he gave the matter a thought. That was not often, however. Somehow just then all those living in close daily contact with Ellinor seemed under a spell to lay aside their thinking and reasoning powers, and float along the tide of her whims and her wishes, helpless and unresisting.

Lucy was under the spell, not a doubt, as she flew here, there, everywhere to execute Ellinor's lightest wish, endeavouring to stand between her and the shadow of annoyances that might ruffle her composure or give her a pin-prick of pain; all the while stopping her own ears with both hands against a funereal voice that seemed perpetually trying to say into them: "Where's the use? What does it matter? What will it matter this time next year?"

And Phil was under the spell also, and as much incapable of sturdy, continued thought and resolute action as any lotus-eater of poetic legend. His whole range of thought now encompassed but one idea that might have found glad, triumphant expression in those three simple words which have been the "io pean" of lovers of every age and generation, ever since there has been found man to ask or woman to give: "She is mine."

He did not stop to add to them—any more than did those other triumphant lovers—three other small words which might fitly have formed their corollary:

"For how long?" Why should he, indeed? Those first three were deep enough, true enough, and strong enough, it seemed to him, to express every thought, feeling, mood, of which he was capable.

He would say them when he got up in the morning, and looked through his letters and cards of invitation, and counted up the number of times he would meet Ellinor that week, and in the other weeks coming; he would say them as he rode alongside of her in the Park, and watched other men's eyes glaring and lowering at him for his monopoly of her beautiful smiles and low-toned talk; and he said them to himself on the night of her ball as he stood just within her drawing-room door watching her in her sweet, regal stateliness receiving her guests. He noted the deep, shining eyes, the high-bred smile that was poetry itself, for it said more in a second than commonplace people could speak or write in an hour; over and over again he said to himself: "She is mine—mine—mine! Let them look at her, admire her to their hearts' content, praise her rare beauty, her infinite grace; she is for none of them. She is mine only. To-night will be a night worth living. I will remember no past, I will know no future; this present hour shall contain for me the quintessence of all life."

The big, matter-of-fact house in Grosvenor Square had for the evening been transformed into a veritable dream of beauty. No walls were to be seen anywhere, a bowery greenery of palms, ferns, and mosses entirely hiding them from sight; doors everywhere had disappeared, and in their place hung curtains of a soft, thick, yellow silk. Flowers formed no part of the decorations; Ellinor had decided against them as likely to spoil the harmony of the scheme of colouring; for an equally obvious reason no coloured lamps of any tint were allowed; in fact, no lights of any sort were to be seen, though light, soft, yellowish, clear, spread itself everywhere, like a quiet sun shining through a veil of clouds. The music also seemed to flow from a hidden source; an almost woodland of palms and interlacing creepers at each end of the ballroom screening the two bands of high-class instrumentalists from view.

"If this is her idea of entertaining, how she must have suffered from our inartistic way of doing things at Stanham!" thought Edie, as side-by-side with Colonel Wickham she entered the ballroom.

This ballroom had been a concert-room,

built out at the back of the house by a previous owner. Its dimensions were good; it was certainly filled to overflowing, but it was not packed, and dancing was not only possible, but enjoyable in it. Edie, however, declined to dance.

"No," she said with decision to Colonel Wickham, "I don't mean to dance once. I don't want to stay long—just an hour or so to look round, and I don't want to be introduced to anybody except Miss Selwyn—that is"—she added, recollecting the fact of Lucy's deep mourning for the first time—"if she is here to-night. I particularly want to speak to her."

Lucy, naturally, had the choice been allowed her, would have preferred not to be present in the scene of gaiety. Ellinor, however, had only needed to give her one long expressive look, and to say meaningly, "I shall never ask you to a second ball, Lucy," to make her feel that choice in the matter was not left her, and had she been in reality the new-made widow she always fancied herself to be, perchance she must have dared society's verdict, and acceded to Ellinor's request, let who might condemn.

The Colonel and Edie went the round of the ballroom twice, and then made their way to the upper rooms, Edie meanwhile steeling her nerves and trying to turn her heart into as near an approach to flint as warm flesh and blood is capable of.

"I shall see them together in another minute," she thought. "I shall see if Phil looks down into her eyes as he used to look down into mine! If he does—if he does, I will just give him one look—he shall feel my look right across the room—and then I'll go straight away home, never speak of him again, never see him, never—never even let his name come into my thoughts!"

And Colonel Wickham, looking down into her quiet, pale face, and wondering over her outward calmness, said to himself:

"Yes, it will be better for her to see those two together as I have seen them more than once. The first step towards a victory is to face one's enemy. Poor child! she must face her to-night."

The drawing-rooms upstairs were three in number, two large, and a smaller room opening off the second, not in a straight line, but at right angles. Colonel Wickham and Edie made the round of the first room, recognising the few people they chanced to know there, then they went on to the

second room, and here, at the farther end, the Colonel stopped and shook hands with a slight, pale girl in some black lace-like dress, and asked permission to introduce Miss Fairfax to her. Thus Edie found herself face to face with Lucy Selwyn.

For a moment each looked at the other in silence. Lucy flushed red, and seemed painfully embarrassed. Edie kept her composure, but somehow did not look quite so pretty and childlike as when she had entered the house about half an hour ago.

The music below at that moment recommenced, and people right and left of them began to separate, and make for the ball-room.

"May I sit down by your side a minute?" asked Edie, slipping into a vacant place next Lucy.

"Come for me in ten minutes, please, Colonel Wickham," she added.

So the Colonel wandered away with the stream, and Lucy and Edie were left side-by-side alone.

"It is so kind of you to come and find me out in this way," began Lucy nervously.

Somehow she seemed to think she ought always to be thanking people for some real or imagined kindness. She never seemed free from the impression that she must have something for which to thank everyone she met.

Edie made no reply, she did not even hear the remark. All her senses at that moment were absorbed in one—that of sight, and speech and hearing were alike impossible.

From the seat which she and Lucy occupied they could see to the farther end of the small room at their right hand, and there, facing them, sat Ellinor on a low easy-chair, while Phil—sideways to them—bent over her, toying with her fan.

An idle scene, surely—a scene that was possibly in one form or another going on all over London in every house that had thrown open its doors that night, yet withal a scene that seemed to make little Edie's heart to stand still and to freeze her warm blood in her veins.

Ellinor's toilettes were always difficult to describe. The one she wore this night—selected after days and nights of protracted thought had been given to the matter—was in colour a harmony in contrast of moss-green and moss-grey—the brightest of spring-tinted forest moss subdued shade by shade into the greyest of forest lichens. It

would have been well-nigh impossible to say where one colour ended and the other began. The beautiful mosses and lichens themselves, exquisitely arranged, accentuated here and there their own colours, and harmonised brilliantly with the glittering emeralds which Ellinor had entwined in the coils of her hair, and had twisted round her neck and arms.

Gloriously beautiful, a triumph alike of nature and art, she looked with the soft light from the hidden lamps falling around and about her. And little Edie sat there gazing—gazing at her with round, staring eyes, saying to herself over and over again :

"I couldn't fancy an angel more beautiful to look at than she. Beside her I must seem like a charity-girl! And yet—and yet—Poor Phil—poor Phil!"

Lucy waited for an answer; getting none, her eyes followed Edie's. She grew more and more embarrassed, and, no doubt, had she been given to a desperate, reckless fashion of arranging her thoughts, would have wished she had been dead a hundred years or so, and that grass was growing two feet high on her grave. She was greatly troubled. Edie's honest, sweet face had touched her, and set her wondering over her preconceived notions of the "little girl who played fast and loose," and now her long silence and fixed eyes made her tremble for what was coming.

Suddenly Edie turned her white face towards her.

"That is your doing. Are you proud of your work?" she asked, in a tone in which no one had ever heard her speak before.

Fancy a rose without its scent, a linnet without its song, a ruby without its colour! Such was little Edie to-night at Ellinor's ball.

Lucy twined her fingers in and out nervously as they lay in her lap.

"I did it for the best," she began tremulously. "Believe me, I thought of his happiness as much as hers!"

"His happiness!" said Edie, fixing full upon Lucy her dark, angry eyes. "Tell me, who gave you the right to judge what would make the happiness of a man all but a stranger to you?"

Lucy bowed her head, and hid her face.

The music below stopped at this moment, and the dancers, as before, came streaming up the stairs, seeking the refuge of the cooler rooms.

Ellinor, evidently bethinking herself of her duties as hostess, left her low chair, and came forward, followed by Phil.

At the entrance to the larger room her eye chanced upon Edie's white, frowning face. She gave her a gracious little smile of recognition, and no doubt would at once have made her way to Edie's side, and hoped, condescendingly, she was having a pleasant evening, had not a sudden stir and flutter of surprise in the farther drawing-room made all eyes look in that direction.

Then it was Ellinor's turn to grow white and tremulous, for there, in the very midst of the gaily-dressed throng, stood Mrs. Thorne, in long, black crape robes, and with a look on her colourless, rigid face which meant vengeance and a scorn of conventionalities if it meant anything at all.

#### CHAPTER LI.

THE silks and satins, velvets and muslins, parted right and left to make way for Mrs. Thorne.

"Where is Miss Yorke?" Ellinor could hear her deep, solemn voice asking as she came along.

Ellinor felt her heart stand still. Not a doubt, a breach of all society's conventions was intended now. Had the choice ever been given to her, she would sooner, any hour of her life, have subsided into unbroken obscurity than have been made a theme for gossip at tea-tables and clubs. More cannot be said to express her terror of what was hanging over her head. Instinctively she half turned to Phil. He was at her elbow in a moment, standing in front of Edie to get there. Edie could have touched his arm, so close was he. He did not so much as see her.

"Where is Miss Yorke?" asked Mrs. Thorne's deep voice for the last time, and then, as she looked up and saw Ellinor, in her serene beauty, standing just in front of her, she added: "Miss Yorke, forgive me for coming in this way in the very midst of your dancing, but I have a message for you—a message that won't bear delay, for it comes from the dead."

Her face was colourless even to her lips as she said the words, but in her eyes there shone a wild glitter. Just such a look as hers might an avenger of blood have worn, who, having tracked his victim down, came upon him outside the city of refuge.

Ellinor's smiles, her commonplaces of greeting, froze upon her lips.

Phil came forward.

"Mrs. Thorne," he said gently, "if you have anything to say to Miss Yorke, will you not come quietly into another room and say it? This is hardly the place for confidences."

He made one step towards the lady, as though to offer to conduct her from the room.

Mrs. Thorne waved him off imperiously.

"Back!" she said. "Stand back! You! What, you are not content with heaping scorn and contumely on my dead son's grave, but you must need join hands with the one who drove him to his death. Back, I say, you who called yourself Rodney's dearest friend!"

Phil felt himself quail before the fierceness and desperation of her eye and voice. He had the presence of mind, however, to draw Ellinor a little farther back into the smaller room. It was by a degree or two less public than the big drawing-rooms.

A low, wailing cry at this moment came from the little group seated on Mrs. Thorne's right hand. She looked round. Her eyes rested on Lucy's blanched, anguish-stricken face.

She beckoned to her.

"Come here," she said. "I know the truth now—who loved him and who played him false. Come, stand by my side, and hear what I have to say to this evil, smooth-tongued woman, who made believe to love him, and led him on to his ruin. Come, curse her as I do! She is your enemy as much as mine. Come!"

But Lucy did not offer to stir. Her weak, trembling limbs, had she so willed it, could not have carried her over the yard or so of carpet to Mrs. Thorne's black skirt.

Phil grew desperate. Where was Uncle Hugh?—where Colonel Wickham? It was dreadful! People kept on pressing in from the other rooms. No one seemed to have any common-sense or reasoning power left.

"If she will not leave us we must leave her," he whispered to Ellinor. "Take my arm. I'll get you out of this."

But Ellinor had recovered her presence of mind now, and had decided for herself what to do.

She quietly advanced towards the elder lady and offered her a chair.

"Will you sit down, Mrs. Thorne?" she said gently.

Then she beckoned to one of the guests who was standing near, an astonished

looking young attaché from the French Legation.

"Kindly fetch my uncle and send for a doctor. It is poor Mrs. Thorne. She is mad—utterly mad, don't you see," she whispered to him in French, and the young fellow vanished forthwith in hot haste.

Mrs. Thorne did not catch the whisper. She was at that moment engaged in unfolding most carefully two strips of note-paper: one, written in a feminine hand and signed with the initials "E. Y."; the other in Rodney's writing, consisting of some tiny fragments pieced together with infinite pains and gummed on another sheet of note-paper.

She turned her back on Ellinor and faced now the anxious, curious faces of the people who came crowding in from the other room. She was a good head taller than most women, and stood higher even than some of the men there. She held out her two strips of paper.

"You see these, ladies and gentlemen, all of you," she said, her voice making itself heard to the farthest wall. "I will tell you what they are. This one is from Miss Yorke, written about this time last year, making a secret appointment with my son, she all the time knowing he had pledged himself to marry another woman; and this other is the last my boy wrote before he died by his own hand, and in it he curses this beautiful, false woman as the one who ruined his life and sent him to his death. I will read it to you."

Phil could stand it no longer.

"It must not be; I will not allow it," he said, going up to Mrs. Thorne, and standing between her and the astonished faces around. "Read your letters, or what you will, to whom you please, Mrs. Thorne, but here it shall not be done."

But at this moment a diversion was to be effected from another quarter, for Lucy had somehow got her strength together to make her way through the throng to Ellinor's side, and had seized both Miss Yorke's hands in hers.

"Oh, for the love of Heaven, say it is not true!" she implored piteously. "Any-one in the whole world, but not you—not you! Only next to Rodney have I loved you!"

"Thank Heaven! reinforcements at last!" thought Phil, as just then he caught sight of Uncle Hugh and Colonel Wickham making their way into the room.

These two gentlemen had come upon each other in a quiet corner of the

billiard-room below (for the evening converted into a refreshment-room), and had been tranquilly exchanging confidences concerning events which had happened some twenty years back, all unconscious of the storm that was raging overhead.

"Strike up at once," Uncle Hugh had said to the musicians, so soon as he had grasped the situation. And forthwith the band had broken into a lively set of quadrilles made up of bag-piping Scotch airs.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, as he entered the saloon, "will you be so kind as to go to the—!" he broke off abruptly—"to the ballroom, I mean. The musicians are tired of playing to the boards." Then he went up to Mrs. Thorne. "May I have the honour of taking you to your carriage, Mrs. Thorne?" he asked, offering her his arm as he spoke.

People seemed to think the kindest thing, under the circumstances, would be to leave the family party to themselves. Colonel Wickham, behind Uncle Hugh, did his best to keep the throng moving towards the door.

Mrs. Thorne's habit of courtesy for a moment returned to her.

"Presently you shall," she answered, bowing ceremoniously to the old gentleman. "But I have one more word to say before I go. A message must always be delivered—that you will admit, I suppose? It is generally admitted. Very well, I have a message to deliver to-night—from the dead to the living—and deliver it I must and will."

A fit messenger from the dead she looked, standing there tall, rigid, with ashen-grey face, glowing eyes, and white hair surmounted by her deep crape head-dress.

It was evidently no use trying to silence her. Speak she must and would.

The room was rapidly emptying now, and the three gentlemen, forming a semi-circle, stood between her and the few guests who lingered still.

"Now listen," she said, holding up her thin white hand. "I will not tell you the story of Rodney's death. You know it, every one of you—she knows it, too."

Here she turned and faced Ellinor, who, like a beautiful marble statue, stood silent there, unquailing and unabashed, while Lucy, a little in the background, in vain tried to stifle her sobs.

"She knows it, I repeat, so there is no need to tell it over again. But she does

not know—how could she?—that though she separated my boy from me in his life, she gave him back to me when she sent him headlong to his death. Night after night he stands by my side now; sometimes he speaks, sometimes he looks only, but his looks say as much as his words."

She paused, drawing a deep long breath.

"I courted a Jassie for mair than a year," came up jarringly from the band below; and Lucy's sobs made an odd incongruous accompaniment.

No one tried to silence Mrs. Thorne now. Each one felt it would be useless. After all it was little more than a family circle standing there to hear her.

"Night after night," she went on, "my boy has stood beside my bed, and night after night I have said to him: 'What is it, Rodney? Shall I go curse her now?' And Rodney has said to me again and again: 'Not yet, mother; not yet.' But last night he came and said: 'To-morrow, mother, take this message from me to her who ruined my life.' Shall I tell you how he looked as well as what he said?"

Here she made one step towards Ellinor, who started and shrank back a little.

Phil managed to get between them.

"Let me take you away—come at once," he whispered.

But Ellinor put him on one side.

"I must hear it," she said faintly.

And he could see she was quivering now beneath the strong restraint she had put upon herself.

"Shall I tell you of the blood that was streaming down his pale face, or the damp, dark stains on his bright hair? No! Why should I? What would you care? You never loved his beautiful face; you never kissed his curls in his baby-days!" she went on, her voice ringing out loud and passionate. "But I will tell you what he said—I am bound to do that—word for word. 'Mother,' he said, 'take her those two letters; lay them at her feet'" (here Mrs. Thorne, stooping, laid the strips of paper on the ground between Ellinor and Lucy); "tell her never to part with

them; they will be her passports when she gets into the other world.'"

Again she paused; and then her voice dropped suddenly to a low whisper as once more she resumed :

"This was Rodney's message. Now hear me, Ellinor Yorke, for I have a word to say to you as you stand there in your beauty and falseness. When your death-hour comes, as come it must, it will be worse a thousandfold than my boy's—more fraught with horror, with doom. God may forgive you—I cannot say; but this I know, Rodney's mother never will."

Her lips set over her last word; one wild fierce look she threw at Ellinor; then gathering together her long black robes, slowly, majestically, she swept towards the door.

But at the door she paused a moment.

"Where is that girl—Lucy Selwyn—who loved my boy truly and would have laid down her life for him? Where is she, I say?" she asked in her deep, solemn tones.

Lucy, half blinded with her tears, came out of her corner, and, shaking like an aspen, made her way to Mrs. Thorne's side.

Mrs. Thorne took her by the wrist.

"Come with me!" she said authoritatively. "Shake the dust from your feet and come. Her bread must be as poison to you, the touch of her hand contamination to you. No roof but mine must shelter you now. Come!"

She dragged the girl with her towards the door, and Lucy, giving one piteous, heart-broken look at Ellinor, departed with Mrs. Thorne.

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